



**Testimony in support of
HB 5053 - An Act Increasing Access to Overdose Reversal Drugs**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and members of the committee, my name is Shawn Lang, and I'm the Deputy Director with AIDS CT, CT's only statewide organization whose sole focus is HIV/AIDS. For the past three years, I've also chaired the CT Opioid Overdose Prevention Workgroup, which has worked to increase awareness about, and expand access to Naloxone, an opioid antagonist which reverses opiate overdoses.

The Opioid Overdose Prevention Workgroup is statewide and has multi-disciplinary, cross department participation. The workgroup is open and current participating partners include the Connecticut Departments of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Public Health, Correction. Social Services, and Children and Families; the Connecticut Prevention Network; APT Foundation; AIDS Connecticut; Walgreens; researchers from Yale and Brown Universities; Recovery Network of Programs; and Medical Doctors.

I'm here to testify in support of **HB 5053 - An Act Increasing Access to Overdose Reversal Drugs**

From 2009 –2014, there were **over 2,000 accidental and unintentional opioid involved deaths that occurred in 150 of our 169 cities and towns.** While the majority of prescription opioid users do not become heroin users, research found that approximately 3 out of 4 new heroin users report as having abused prescription opioids prior to using heroin.

Addiction is a multi-faceted and complex issue that requires better and more treatment options, as well as a coordinated, multi-pronged approach which must include expanding availability and making Naloxone access easier.

Ensuring that all first responders in municipalities across the state are equipped with Naloxone will save lives. We have a saying in Harm Reduction Services – a person can only enter treatment if they're alive.

Naloxone is a very safe medication with no real side effects. Training on how to recognize and overdose and administer Naloxone can take as little as ten minutes. It is easy to administer. Under the Department of Public Health's OPEN Access Project, staff at AIDS CT have trained over 700 individuals, including clients who access our syringe services program. Over the past year, our clients have reversed over 50 ODs in the greater Hartford area.

Please join us in supporting strengthening the state's response and ability to address the opiate addiction epidemic.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.

Shawn M. Lang, Deputy Director, AIDS CT
860.247.2437 X319
slang@aids-ct.org